



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.5949/UPO9781846316753.011](https://doi.org/10.5949/UPO9781846316753.011)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Roueché, C. (2009). Acclamations at the Council of Chalcedon. In R. Price, & M. Whitby (Eds.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (pp. 169-177). Liverpool University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5949/UPO9781846316753.011>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

ACCLAMATIONS AT THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

Charlotte Roueché

One of the more startling aspects of the conciliar acts is the regular recording of acclamations. To a modern reader, they appear intrusive and inappropriate, not least because in modern writing-based societies, cheering and shouting by groups has become increasingly marginalized: it is associated with disorder and disruption, even if it has an established role in certain situations, such as sporting events. This sense of what is appropriate is also influenced by a modern belief in the value of individual commitment. To a modern reader, the statements attributed to the individual bishops seem more significant than the ‘shouts’ of the group as a whole. But in a pre-individual society, such shouts have a very different significance.

Acclamations can be found throughout the ancient Near East, and in both the Jewish and the Graeco-Roman tradition. Their primary function must be one of communication in a non-literate form. In both cultures they seem to be closely associated with religious practice. When the people of Ephesus were being encouraged to oppose the Christian apostle Paul, the crowd in the theatre was encouraged to shout the cult acclamation ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians’. This will have been a familiar chant from their normal religious ceremonies; it is therefore understandable that they proceeded to repeat the acclamation over a period of two hours.¹ The fullest account of this aspect of acclamations is still the study, written in 1920 by Peterson, of the acclamation ‘One God’, a pre-Christian acclamation which was enthusiastically adopted by Christian assemblies, and can be found in the conciliar acts, e.g. at Chalcedon, εἷς θεὸς ὁ τοῦτο ποιήσας (‘It is the one God who has done this’, Chalcedon VI. 13).²

1 Act. Ap. 19:23–41, with Robert (1982), 55–7.

2 Peterson (1920). See also Edessa, First report, meeting of 12 April (Doran 2006, 139), meeting of 14 April (ibid. 141), Second Report (ibid. 148), and the acts of 536, *ACO* 3, p. 85.18–19, etc.

In all these situations the role of acclamations is seen as positive and reinforcing: the verbs used in the ancient texts, translated as shouting or crying out, have an inappropriately negative connotation in English. But the liturgies of the churches have retained that role for acclamations, although a modern description would perhaps use the term ‘chant’; even the simplest of rituals has retained the function of ‘amen’. This reflects the most essential function of acclamation, as an expression of assent. It also expresses that assent as shared and unanimous. In a recent study, Angelos Chaniotis has pointed to the importance of such ritual vocalism in confirming the bonds both among participants and between them and the divinity in Greek religious rituals.³

But acclamations also had a long history of secular usage, firstly as an indication of assent. Documents record decrees as being approved by acclamation – so the councillors ‘shouted in support’, *epeboesan*, at Tyre in 174 A.D.⁴ or *epephonesan* at Oxyrhynchus in 192.⁵ The formality of this process is confirmed by an inscription from Mylasa, where the acclamations, in Greek, are preceded by the Latin formula ‘*succlamatum est*’.⁶ The simplest acclamation was simply one of assent – in Latin *placet*; this is found, for example, in the Acts of the Council of Serdica in 343, where assent is invited by the phrase: *Si hoc omnibus placet*, followed by *Synodus respondit: Placet*.⁷ But another way to express such assent was to pick up a proposed phrase – for example ἄξιον, ‘worthy’, as in the later church liturgies. This kind of acclamation underpinned the awarding of honorific epithets and titles, such as *philopatris*, patriotic, or *ktistes*, founder, in the east;⁸ John Chrysostom describes the acclamation of a benefactor in the theatre, ἅπαντες κηδεμόνα καλοῦντες.⁹ Similarly in Rome Livy can conceive of Camillus being acclaimed as *Romulus ac pater patriae, conditorque* (5.49.7). Under the empire, emperors came to be acclaimed regularly by the Senate – so Pliny, *Panegyricus* 75.2.

From this process it was a short step to election to offices of real power. Already in republican Rome the title of Imperator was granted

3 Chaniotis (2006), 226–30.

4 *OGIS* 595.

5 Hunt and Edgar (1934), 241.

6 *IMylasa* (Blümel, 1987–8) 605.

7 Mansi III, 23B, 23D, 24C, cf. 23A.

8 On this procedure see Robert (1965), 215–16.

9 *De inan. glor.* 4, with Robert (1960), 569–73.

by *conclamatio*.¹⁰ The kings of ancient Israel were acclaimed,¹¹ and mediaeval kings were to adopt the practice.¹² By the third century acclamations formed part of the process of appointing a pope (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.29), and they were to become standard in the appointment of bishops during the fourth century (Augustine, *ep.* 213). The origins of acclamations in religious ritual gave them extra significance, and they were seen as reinforcing authority, not least by being unanimous: such unanimity could be interpreted as a mark of divine inspiration, both within religious rituals (as emphasized by Chaniotis), and also beyond them. Thus Apuleius can write of unanimous acclamations as seen to be inspired: *consensum publicae vocis pro divino auspiciū interpretatur* (Apuleius, *Apol.* 73). Cassius Dio can use similar language of acclamations in the Circus Maximus in 192: οὕτω μὲν ἔκ τινος θείας ἐπιπνοίας ἐνεθουσίασαν (Dio 75.4.5). This made them all the more valuable in conferring office: Eusebius writes of the election of pope Fabian, ‘The whole people, as if moved by one divine spirit, with all enthusiasm and one voice cried out in agreement, “Worthy”’.¹³

Moreover, the process was not one of simple indications of assent, or the monosyllabic awarding of titles. The acclaiming crowd could pick up on a preceding phrase; they could also produce an extended phrase – such as ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians’. Already in the first century AD crowds at Rome could respond to the news of Germanicus’ restored health with the acclamation *Salva Roma, salva patria, salvus est Germanicus* (Suetonius, *Gaius* 6.1). This is also illustrated in the record of the meeting in 178 of a religious confraternity devoted to Dionysus, at Athens. Here statutes are proposed and validated by a show of hands, but this is followed by acclamations: ‘Long live our priest Herodes! Now we are happy! Now our Bacchus Club is the first among all (Bacchic) clubs! The vice-priest has done a find job! Let the stele be made’ (*IG*² 1368, trans. Chaniotis). In 438 the Senate greeted the issuing of the Theodosian Code not with simple indications of assent, but with a series of complex phrases; the documents record how many times each acclamation was repeated (*Cod. Theod., Gesta senatus*). Similarly, the account of the election of Augustine’s successor as bishop of Hippo

10 Caesar, *Bell. Civ.* II. 26.1; Tacitus, *Annales* III. 74.6.

11 Saul, 1 Samuel 10.24; Solomon, 1 Kings 1.39.

12 The fundamental study is still Kantorowicz (1946).

13 ἐφ’ ᾧ τὸν πάντα λαόν, ὥσπερ ὕφ’ ἐνὸς πνεύματος θείου κινηθέντα, προθυμία, πάσῃ καὶ μιᾷ ψυχῇ ἄξιον ἐπιβοῆσαι, Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI. 29.3.

enumerates the repetitions of acclamations: ‘The people shouted, “To God be thanks! To Christ be praise” (this was repeated twenty-three times). “O Christ, hear us; may Augustine live long!” (repeated sixteen times). “We will have thee as our father, thee as our bishop” (repeated eight times)’ (Aug., *ep.* 213).

Their role in religious practice, together with their usefulness to the rulers, therefore conferred authority on acclamations; and their widespread use meant that they could be used to express not just consent but also complex expressions of approval – and of opinion. The best known example of the use of acclamations by an assembly to obtain a demand is probably their use to obtain a punishment – thus the shouts of the crowd in the Gospel accounts of the trials of Jesus, or the use of the phrase *Christianos ad leones*, ‘Christians to the lions’.¹⁴ These accounts, of course, reinforce a modern sense of acclamations as disruptive and malign; but it is clear that they were used in a variety of settings. The acts of the church councils provide the richest source of accounts of acclamations in their entirety. The Acts of Chalcedon are important in this regard; but one of the fullest collections has also just been translated into English. This is the record, only found in Syriac, of gatherings in Edessa, in 449, which was read into the minutes of the Robber Council of Ephesus, later that year, including extensive listings of the acclamations used.¹⁵ The formulaic shape – and rhythm – of the phrases could be used to structure a wide range of requests.

This can be illustrated by examining a set of acclamations inscribed in the late third century in a rural settlement in the territory of Termessus in Lycia; these honoured a certain Hermaius, a local chieftain and ‘brigand-chaser’, asking for him to be kept in office in the territory:¹⁶

Let him who (acts) on behalf of the city reside/remain!
 Let him who (acts) on behalf of peace remain!
 This is of benefit to the city.
 A decree for the brigand-chaser!
 Let the well-born brigand-chaser guard the city!
 Let him who has killed brigands guard the city!
 Let him who has often acted as *ekdikos* for the city guard the city!

14 See Potter (1996).

15 The Syriac text with a German translation is in Flemming (1917), now translated into English by Doran (2006), 133–88.

16 Ballance and Roueché (2001), 87–112.

Let him who has acted as *ekdikos* for the city remain!
 Let him who has ... sent annona remain!
 Let him who (acts) on behalf of peace remain!
 Let Hermaius remain, let the son of Askoureus remain!
 Hermaius son of Askoureus as brigand-chaser as long as we live!
 Let him remain so that we can live!
 Let him remain according to the order of the governor!
 Let him who has often saved the city remain!
 Let him who has sent supplies to the city remain!

This particular text lacks the opening phrases. A more complete, although less complex, set of acclamations was inscribed in the early sixth century at Aphrodisias in Caria, each on one of the twenty columns of a stoa which had been restored by a local benefactor, Albinus:¹⁷

- i: God is one, for the whole world!
- ii: Many years for the emperors!
- iii: Many years for the eparchs!
- iv: Many years for the Senate!
- v: Many years for the metropolis!
- vi: PERDE¹⁸ Albinus – up with the builder of the stoa!
- vii: Lord, lover of your country, remain for us!
- viii: Your buildings are an eternal reminder, Albinos, you who love to build.
- ix: ...] Albinus *clarissimus*.
- x: PERDE Albinus, behold what you have given!
- xi: The whole city says this: Your enemies to the river! May the great God provide this!’
- [xii is lost.]
- xiii: Up with Albinus *clarissimus*, to the Senate!
- xiv: [? ...] envy does not vanquish fortune.
- xv: Up with Albinus, the builder of this work also!
- xvi: You have disregarded wealth and obtained glory, Albinus *clarissimus*.
- xvii: Albinus *clarissimus*, like your ancestors a lover of your country. may you receive plenty.
- xviii: Providing [?a building] for the city, he is acclaimed [?in it also].
- xix: With your buildings you have made the city brilliant, Albinus, lover of your country.

¹⁷ Roueché (2004), no. 83.

¹⁸ The word or name PERDE is clear, but its meaning is very uncertain.

xx: The whole city, having acclaimed (you) with one voice, says: 'He who forgets you, Albinus *clarissimus*, does not know God.

There are several patterns that can be detected in the two sets of inscribed acclamations and in the conciliar acclamations. Firstly, it is common to start with statements of orthodoxy and loyalty: so Aphrodisias, nos. i–v, and at Edessa.¹⁹ Only after such expressions of loyalty does the series of requests begin. There are stock phrases. Some are very widespread – so 'many years' (Albinos i–v; Chalcedon VI, 15) 'so-and-so is victorious' (the term which gave its name to the great Nika riot of 532 in Constantinople); 'up with so and so', and some a little less common, but still widespread: 'may he reside/remain' is used of Hermaios and Albinos. Secondly, there is a basic structure of using repetitions and variation, such as the repetition of 'Albinus *clarissimus*' in a variety of phrases, or, at Edessa, 'Let our lords learn this! Let the prefects learn this! Let the master learn this! Let the Senate learn this!'²⁰ Another method to make the acclamations flow more easily is to change one half of a sentence, and then the other: so A + B, A + C, A + D, then D + E, D + F: this can be seen in the acclamations for Hermaios. There is also the occasional recurrence of an earlier line, almost like a refrain: 'Up with Albinus'.

Requests are expressed in standard ways. One is the dative of direction or purpose: 'A decree for the brigand-chaser! Your enemies to the river! Albinus to the senate!' At Edessa, 'The hater of Christ to the wild beasts! The party of Hiba to the stadium! An orthodox bishop for the metropolis!'²¹ Another recurrent pattern is the phrasing, 'He who does so and so, let him ...': of Hermaios, 'Let him who has often saved the city reside!'; at Ephesus, 'Whoever loves Hiba is a Satan';²² at Aphrodisias, 'He who forgets you, Albinus *clarissimus*, does not know God!'

All this demonstrates a widespread range of formulae and structures which made it possible to concert and organize acclamations, to great effect. To be effective, however, there were two further requirements. Firstly, they needed to be recorded verbatim. One aspect of this is the increased use of improved systems of stenography during the third and

19 First Report at the meetings on 12 April (Doran 2006, 139), 14 April (ibid 141);

Second report (ibid. 148).

20 First report, 14 April (Doran 2006, 142).

21 First report, 14 April (Doran 2006, 142–3).

22 Doran (2006), 176.

fourth centuries, to which the acts of the councils bear striking witness. The records therefore existed.

Even more importantly, they needed to be accepted as having some kind of status, as a real expression of opinion. In 331 Constantine issued a law arranging for acclamations of governors, probably by provincial assemblies, to be reported to the central government by the praetorian prefects and vicars: *praefectis praetorio et comitibus, qui per provincias constituti sunt, provincialium nostrorum voces ad nostrum scientiam referentibus*.²³ But an increasing tendency to record acclamations, and to inscribe them, can already be detected in the third century. The acclamations for Hermaius included a request which must have been forwarded to a senior authority. It seems very likely that, as so often with imperial legislation, Constantine was legislating to confirm a practice which was already developing, of using acclamations to support petitions.

It is therefore unsurprising that, from the fourth century onwards, we find acclamations inscribed and recorded in detail. I have argued elsewhere that in the secular world this reflects, and reinforces, a process by which powerful individuals could bypass the normal civic structures in their relationship with the populace and with the imperial authorities.²⁴ The authority of such procedures must come from the fact that they appear to confirm unanimity, which they therefore emphasize: so at Aphrodisias ‘the whole city’ acclaims (xi, xx); exactly the same phrase is used at Edessa.²⁵ In the church councils, the acclamations are required to confirm the full involvement of all those present in the unanimous decisions which were required; and that therefore offers an opportunity for those wishing to express opinions. One request of the Egyptian bishops at Chalcedon is, precisely, that their acclamations should be forwarded to the emperor: τὰς φωνὰς τῷ βασιλεῖ, ‘our words to the emperor’ (Chalcedon I. 173).

The acts therefore show both how acclamations had a significant role to play in the authentication of authority, ecclesiastical as well as secular. Augustine describes the situation when he talks of the election of his successor, Eraclius, in 426: ‘The notaries of the church are, as you observe, recording what I say, and recording what you say; both my address and your acclamations are not allowed to fall to the ground. To

²³ *Cod. Theod.* I. 16.6, whence *Cod. Just.* I. 40.3.

²⁴ Roueché (2007), 183–92.

²⁵ Second report (Doran 2006, 149).

speak more plainly, we are making up an ecclesiastical record of this day's proceedings; for I wish them to be in this way confirmed so far as pertains to men'.²⁶ At both Hippo and Chalcedon, the *gesta* of the meeting are composed of both the sermon or the addresses and the acclamations: both are essential to the conclusions. This helps to explain the careful recording of the acclamations at a variety of assemblies; just as the acclamations from the meetings at Edessa were read into the minutes at Ephesus in 449, similar collections of acclamations, from meetings held in 518 at Constantinople, at Apamea, and at Tyre, were preserved and read into the minutes of the council of 536.²⁷ These cases illustrate very clearly how the respect for acclamations, and the need for the authority which they conveyed, could empower assemblies who wished to make their views felt. The conciliar acts, taken with the epigraphic record, provide a good understanding of the processes of a very important institution in ancient life, which also had a great influence on the development of the liturgies of the churches.²⁸

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ballance, M. and Roueché, C. (2001), 'Three inscriptions from Ovacik', in Harrison, R.M., *Mountain and Plain: From the Lycian Coast to the Phrygian Plateau in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Period* (Ann Arbor), 87–112.
- Blümel, Wolfgang, ed. (1987–8), *Die Inschriften von Mylasa* (Bonn).
- Chaniotis, Angelos (2006), 'Rituals between Norms and Emotions: Rituals as Shared Experience and Memory', in E. Stavrianopoulou, ed., *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*, Kernos Supplement 16 (Liège), 211–38.
- Doran, Robert (2006), *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa* (Kalamazoo).
- Flemming, Johannes (1917), *Akten der ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449. Abh. der kön. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philologisch-historische Klasse, NF 15.1.
- Hunt, A.S. and Edgar, C.C. (1934), *Select Papyri II* (Harvard).

26 Augustine, *ep.* 213, 'A notariis ecclesiasticis excipiuntur quae dicitis; et meus sermo et vestrae acclamationes in terram non cadunt. Apertius ut dicam, ecclesiastica nunc gesta conficimus: sic enim hoc esse, quantum ad homines attinet, confirmatum volo.'

27 *ACO* 3, pp. 71–7, 85–7, 102–3.

28 For further studies on acclamations see Roueché (1984, 1999), and, most recently, Wiemer (2004).

- Kantorowicz, Ernst (1946) *Laudes Regiae* (Berkeley).
- Mansi, J.-D., ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.-D. Mansi, 31 vols (Florence and Venice, 1759–98; Paris and Leipzig, 1901–6).
- Peterson, Erik (1920), *Heis theos : epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Göttingen).
- Potter, D. (1996), 'Performance, power and justice in the High Empire', in W. J. Slater, ed., *Roman Theater and Society: E. Togo Salmon Papers* (Ann Arbor), vol. 1, 129–60.
- Robert, Louis, (1960) *Hellenica XI–XII* (Paris).
- (1965) *Hellenica XIII* (Paris).
- (1982), 'La date de l'épigrammatiste Rufinus. Philologie et réalité', *CRAI* (1982) 50–63, 55–7, = *Opera Minora Selecta V* (1989), 129, 777–90, 782–4.
- Roueché, Charlotte (1984), 'Acclamations in the later Roman empire: new evidence from Aphrodisias', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74, 181–99.
- (1999), 'Looking for Late Antique ceremonial: Ephesos and Aphrodisias', in H. Friesinger and F. Krinzinger, eds. (1999), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions Wien 1995* (Archäologische Forschungen 1, DenkschrWien 260) (Vienna), 161–8.
- (2004) *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, Online second edition available at <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/ala2004>
- (2007), 'From Aphrodisias to Stauropolis', in R. Salway and J. Drinkwater (eds.) *Wolf Liebeschuetz reflected* (London), 183–192.
- Wiemer, H.-U. (2004), 'Akklamationen im spätrömischen Reich. Zur Typologie und Funktion eines Kommunikationsrituals', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 86: 27–73.